

IMRAN LEARNS ABOUT RAMADAN

by
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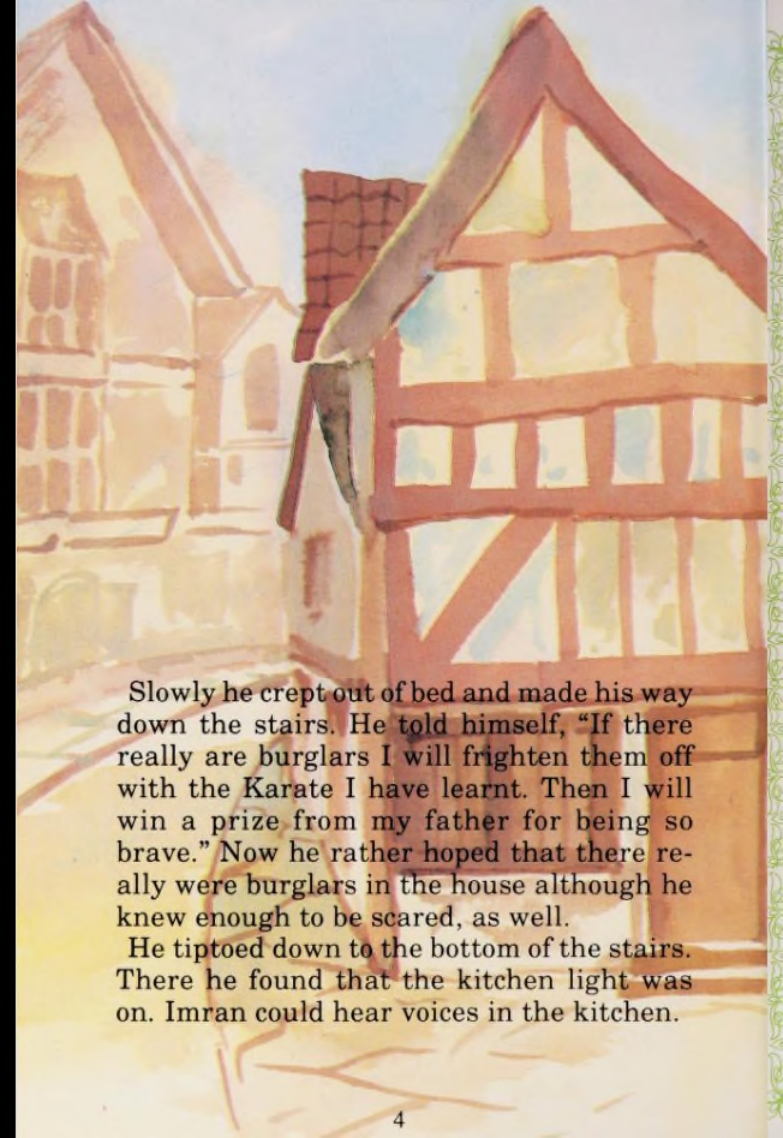


بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IMRAN LEARNS ABOUT RAMADAN

It was four o'clock in the morning! Imran was fast asleep under his bedclothes when suddenly he was wide awake. There was noise in the kitchen just underneath his bedroom. He opened his eyes. The light was on in the hallway.

"Who can that be in the kitchen at this time of night?" he asked himself, "Why is the hallway light on? Surely mother and father are fast asleep. They always turn out all the lights before they sleep." He found it difficult to imagine that burglars would be so stupid as to turn on all the lights and make a lot of noise. But he couldn't think of anyone else who would be up at this unearthly time of night.



Slowly he crept out of bed and made his way down the stairs. He told himself, "If there really are burglars I will frighten them off with the Karate I have learnt. Then I will win a prize from my father for being so brave." Now he rather hoped that there really were burglars in the house although he knew enough to be scared, as well.

He tiptoed down to the bottom of the stairs. There he found that the kitchen light was on. Imran could hear voices in the kitchen.

“How many of them are there?” he asked himself as he rolled up his sleeves to prepare for action. He pushed the kitchen door open gently ready to surprise the thieves. But he got the surprise. There were his mother and father seated at the breakfast table eating a meal! At four o’clock in the morning!

“*As-salaamu alaikum* Imran,” said his mother. Then all three of them said at the same time, “What are you doing up so early?” and they all laughed.

“*Wa alaikumu’s-salaam*, father and mother,” Imran said, walking towards the table, “I thought that you were burglars.”

“Oh Imran!” his mother laughed, “Didn’t I tell you that the month of Ramadan is starting? All the Muslims all over the world are fasting today. Everyone is awakening before dawn to eat a little before the day begins.”

“Of course, you did,” Imran said in surprise, because he had completely forgotten. He sat down at the table with them.

Imran knew that Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. He knew that the month is started when Muslims see the thin new moon just after the setting of the sun. “Even that English word ‘month’ should really be ‘moon-th’. The moon goes from thin to fat and back to thin again in one month,” his mother had told him. He had learnt from

his mother that Muslims don't eat or drink from before the first light of dawn until just after the sunset. Very sensibly of course, there is a meal called *Suhoor* before the dawn.

Imran felt a little bit left out. "How old do I have to be before I can start fasting father?" he asked.

"When you are about seven years old you can begin doing a half day sometimes and maybe even a full day now and again, Imran," his father said, "Bit by bit you become used to fasting. Then you can do a little more each year. One day you will fast the whole month with everybody."

"Father," Imran began to ask, resting his chin on his two hands, "Why do Muslims fast?"

"We fast, Imran, because Allah ordered us to fast in the Qur'an," his father said, "And because the Prophet, *salla'llahu alaihi wa sallama*, always did the fast and the Muslims always do."

"That was a very simple answer," Imran thought.

"Ramadan is a very special month full of blessings for Muslims all over the world," his father continued.

"What is a blessing?" Imran asked. Like children everywhere he was always full of

questions. His father didn't mind his questions too much. When he answered them they often had very interesting talks.

"A blessing, Imran," he said, "Is some good which Allah puts into a thing which He loves. He puts a lot of blessings and good into Ramadan. Allah is merciful and kind, but in Ramadan He is especially kind."

"If we didn't fast we might forget how it feels not to have anything to eat or drink like very poor people do," his mother said, "It is very good and healthy not to eat or drink sometimes. But it is very difficult indeed when people are starving because they have no food at all."

"It is good training for Muslims as well," his father said, "Muslims work at becoming better people all the time. We learn not to be greedy and selfish. In Ramadan, as well as not eating and drinking we also are extra careful not to tell lies, or tell stories about people. We just generally act a bit better than we normally do. That is good training for the rest of the year."

"Can I fast today, father, please?" Imran begged, eager to join in with the adults, "Please, just for half a day?"

"Not today, Imran," his mother answered quickly, "Because the time for the meal of *Suhoor* is almost over. I don't want you to

fast without eating something first."

Imran must have looked very disappointed because she quickly added, "Tomorrow you can fast, *insha'Allah*," and he cheered up.

True to her word, the next day his mother woke Imran up at the time of *Suhoor* to have the early breakfast. Later in the morning, at around ten, Imran went next door, as he usually did, to feed Mrs. Ali's cat because Mrs. Ali was quite ill. Really she was able to feed the cat herself. She just liked an excuse to have Imran come round and so did Imran. Sometimes too Imran's mother helped her with the housework and the shopping. Imran always like helping Mrs. Ali. And his mother had told him that Allah is well pleased with Muslims who help other people for the sake of Allah.

When Imran reached Mrs. Ali's house he was very surprised and shocked to find her eating.

"*As-salaamu alaikum*, Mrs. Ali," he said, but he was too embarrassed to say to an old lady like Mrs. Ali, "Why are you eating? Why are you not fasting?"

She seemed to read his mind for she said, "*Wa alaikumu's-salaam* Imran. You can see that I'm not fasting today and that is because I'm ill. The doctor has given me some medicines to take which I have to take during the

day. So I cannot fast."

"Oh Mrs. Ali," said Imran in surprise, "I thought that Allah wants all adults to fast."

"Yes, Allah orders all adults to fast. But Allah allows people who are poorly not to fast. They can make up their fasts another time," Mrs. Ali replied, "And Allah allows people who are travelling to do the same."

Imran must have still looked confused for she continued, "Allah is merciful. He wants us to look after ourselves. If we make ourselves more ill then Allah is angry with us. I am unwell at the moment and cannot fast during this month. So I will fast afterwards when I am better, to make up for what I have missed."

"Oh I see," said Imran, "I didn't know that. Mrs. Ali you must look after yourself well. You must not make Allah angry with you."

"I *will* look after myself, Imran," she said, smiling to him.

Imran returned home and played for a while on the swing in the back garden. After a short time he began to feel hungry and thirsty. Of course it had completely slipped his mind why he was hungry. He had not eaten since before the first light of the dawn. He had forgotten that he was fasting. So he made his way towards the kitchen.

Imran never ate alone. He had learnt not to

just go into the kitchen and take food for himself. Muslims, he knew, sat and ate together with other people. Today was very unusual. He suddenly had such a great hunger as he had never ever had before. He didn't know where anybody was with whom he could eat and drink. So he went to the kitchen and took a banana from the fruit bowl and a glass of juice. Then he sat at the kitchen table.

As he was finishing the last bite he suddenly remembered just why he was so hungry. "I'm fasting!" he thought, "*Astaghfirullah* (I ask Allah to forgive me)! I was supposed to be fasting!" Imran panicked.

Just then he heard his mother somewhere in the house and he rushed off to find her. "Mother, mother," he cried, really upset, "Where are you?"

"What on earth has happened, Imran?" asked his mother, "Why are you crying?"

"Oh mother, Allah is going to be very angry with me. I forgot that I was fasting and ate a banana and drank some juice," said Imran, rubbing his tearful eyes.

"Calm down Imran," she said, "Allah is not angry at you, because you ate accidentally. I think that He will definitely forgive you. He becomes angry when we do something wrong and we know that it is wrong."

Imran calmed down.

"It was Allah who fed you, when you forgot that you were fasting," she said, "It's almost twelve o'clock now. Fast for another half an hour. Then I'll make you something to eat. When your father comes home you can tell him that you fasted half a day. He will be very pleased."

Imran felt a little better. He had only forgotten. Allah was not angry. It was Allah who had fed him. He marvelled at this.

Imran thought about people trying a little harder in this month to please Allah. It seemed a wonderful way, to have this one special month. He could see that people do come closer to Allah. People are much more aware of Allah. He could see that it is good that Muslims know what it is like to be hungry and thirsty. They know how difficult it is for people who cannot afford to buy much food and drink. His mother had told him that the Prophet, *salla'llahu alaihi wa sallama*, was very generous and giving in Ramadan. Imran decided that it would be a good time to save money and give it to those poor people who find it difficult to buy enough food to eat.

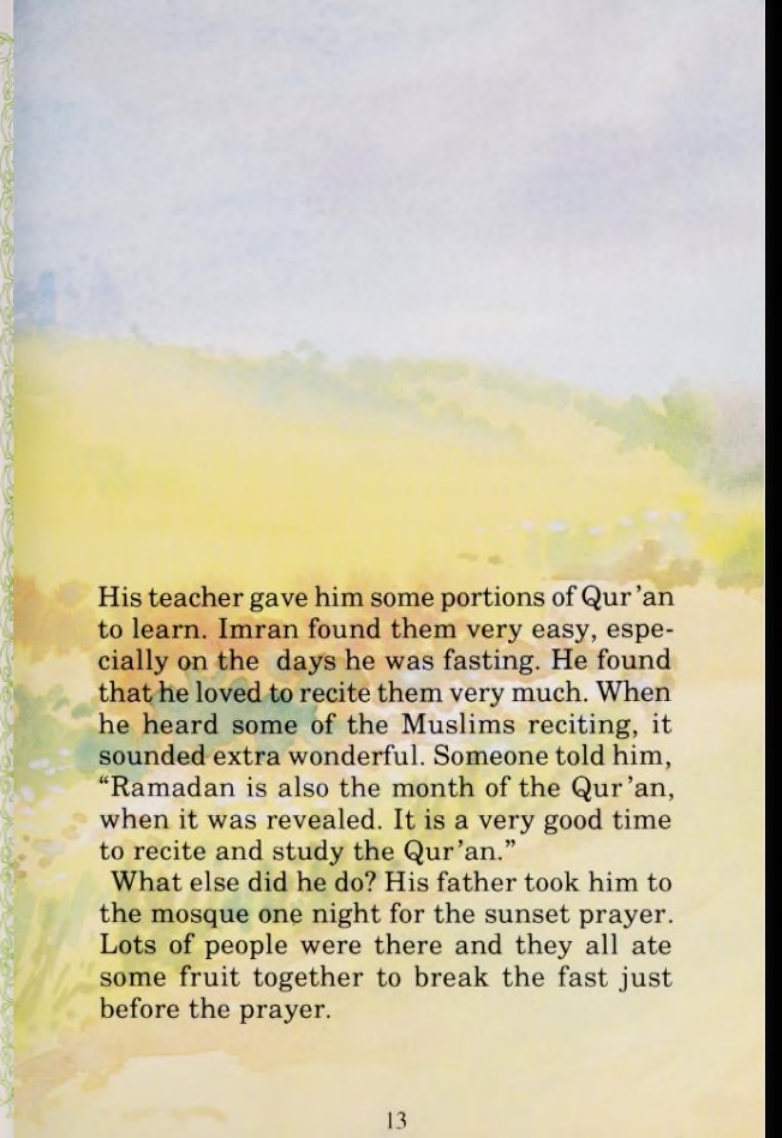
Imran found out that a lot of his friends at school were also fasting for a half day. They normally had some money with them to have milk and biscuits in their break time. Imran

decided to ask them to save that money on the days they were fasting. They could give it to the poor. Imran's father and mother were pleased with his idea. Even his headmaster, Mr. Ali, was very pleased. He made an announcement in morning assembly about it. He told the children who wanted to take part in it to give their money to Imran.

By the end of the week Imran had collected quite a lot of money. He was ready to give it away. He used to think that poor people were only in Somalia or Afghanistan. Recently he had found out that quite a lot of people in this country are poor as well. So he decided to give the money to them.

The day that he was to give the money away there was a big surprise for Imran. Newspaper reporters had found out about his idea. They wanted to know more about it. They talked to him and wrote all about him. They even took a picture of the whole school. Imran was a little bit afraid of that. But when he went out with his father and found the poor people and gave them the money, he was very happy. He could see that they were very pleased that he wanted to help them. He hoped that Allah was pleased with him as well.

And the month was very exciting for him indeed. He had learnt now to recite Qur'an.



His teacher gave him some portions of Qur'an to learn. Imran found them very easy, especially on the days he was fasting. He found that he loved to recite them very much. When he heard some of the Muslims reciting, it sounded extra wonderful. Someone told him, "Ramadan is also the month of the Qur'an, when it was revealed. It is a very good time to recite and study the Qur'an."

What else did he do? His father took him to the mosque one night for the sunset prayer. Lots of people were there and they all ate some fruit together to break the fast just before the prayer.

Another night Imran went after the night prayer, as a really special treat. There were extra prayers and another Imam recited a lot of Qur'an. Although it was quite long Imran was thrilled by the beautiful Qur'an recitation.

Other nights people came to their house to break the fast with Imran's mother and father. Sometimes they went out to break their fast in other houses. People ate together in one way or another almost every night and it was so much more fun.

When the month was over, they got up early, after the sunrise and ate a light breakfast. They went, all of them, to the mosque for the Eid prayer. There were enormous numbers

of people there. Imran had never seen so many Muslims, men, women and children together. The Imam lead the prayer and gave two talks in Arabic and English. Then everybody greeted everybody else. Imran had never shaken so many hands or hugged so many people in all his life before.

The day was a celebration and people visited each other, ate wonderful sweeties and had a real holiday. But Imran was a little sad. He didn't know why, so he asked his mother, "Why am I sad, mother?"

She smiled and said, "We are all sad, Im-ran, because Ramadan has gone for another year. All the Muslims are a little bit sad, today."

And Imran knew that was the real reason and he knew that he would look forward to Ramadan coming again.



QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO ANSWER

- 1) What is the name of the month in which Muslims fast?
- 2) What is the Arabic word for fasting?
- 3) Why is Ramadan a special month?
- 4) Do people who are ill have to fast?
- 5) Why was Imran very upset when he accidentally ate something?
- 6) What do you know about people who forget that they are fasting and eat by mistake?
- 7) Give a few good reasons why Muslims fast?
- 8) Why do some people call Ramadan a month of training?
- 9) What does Ramadan make us think about?
- 10) Who does Ramadan bring us closer to and how?

THE ARABIC ALPHABET

ا alif	ب ba'	ت ta	ث tha'	ج jiim
ح haa'	خ xaa'	د daal	ذ daal	ر raa'
ز zaay	س siin	ش shiin	ص saad	ض daad
ط taa'	ظ dhaa'	ع ayn	غ gayn	ف faa'
ق qaaf	ك k	ل laam	م miim	ن nuun
ه haa'	و waw	ي yaa'		